

## UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

22 March 1965

## MEMORANDUM FOR HOLDERS OF USIB-D-24.8/1

SUBJECT : Assessment of East German Efforts to Improve Barriers Around West Berlin

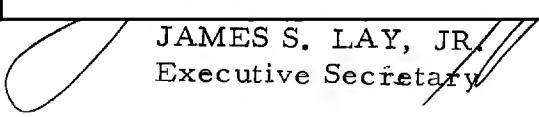
REFERENCE : USIB-D-24.8/1, 9 March 1965

1. On 20 March 1965, all USIB members had concurred in the original report on this subject in the reference, prepared by the ad hoc interagency working group which included representatives from CIA (Chairman), State, DIA, and NSA.

2. Since circulation of the reference, the annex has been updated and a few factual corrections made as a result of the receipt of more recent information from Berlin. The conclusions and the basic analysis remain unchanged.

3. Accordingly, the attached conclusions and annex on the subject, as concurred in by the USIB with the updated corrections referred to in 2. above, are circulated herewith for information and use as a substitute for the referenced document.

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JAMES S. LAY, JR.  
Executive Secretary

Attachment

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OCI No. 0523/65

Copy No. \_\_\_\_\_

16 March 1965

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CONCLUSIONS BERLIN  
WORKING GROUP

1. The excavation of large ditches (16 feet wide and 9 feet deep) and the installation of electrified fencing by the East Germans at points along the sector and zonal borders of West Berlin appear to be part of a program begun around the turn of the year to tighten security around the city. Escapes by refugees and defecting border guards--roughly 570 in 1964--would be rendered more difficult.
2. The ditches and fences may also be designed to modernize the ugly features of the fortifications hastily thrown up since 1961. The construction would also have the effect of highlighting the permanence and institutional character of West Berlin's physical separation from the surrounding territory.
3. The construction may facilitate a significant reduction in the number of East German guards now required to patrol the sector/zonal borders.
4. At the moment, the ditching appears to be confined largely to relatively open areas. Of the total 95 miles of West Berlin sector/zonal border, approximately 54 miles

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--excluding the 9.3 mile stretch of masonry through the center of the city--lend themselves to this type of excavation.

5. The West Berliners so far have paid scant attention to the ditches. For the moment they seem content with Mayor Albsrtz' explanation that the ditches and fencing are part of a long-term East German border improvement program and need not be cause for concern. It is possible that their composure would be shaken, however, by an all-out effort to encircle the city quickly with the new barriers. The stock-piling of concrete slabs at the excavation sites and the accumulation of 180 bulldozers outside Berlin could reflect preparations for such a crash program.

6. As of now, we think the improvement in security is not the portent of a new Berlin crisis. However,   25X1  
25X1   reports that a special election for the East German Volkskammer will be held this year. If so, then this could be the occasion for the long-delayed formal incorporation of East Berlin into the GDR. One consequence of incorporation could be an attempt to deny access of Allied military personnel to East Berlin.

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ANNEX

16 March 1965

## THE BERLIN DITCH

Since at least mid-December 1964, the East Germans have been excavating large ditches at various points along the sector and zonal borders of West Berlin, primarily in relatively open areas adjacent to the British and French Sectors. Beginning in July 1964, the East Germans had begun to install electrified alarm fences at several points on the city's borders.

The Ditches

Two adjacent ditches are being excavated, and probably will be connected soon, along the 3.5 mile stretch from Heerstrasse south along the British sector/zonal border. Three more unconnected ditches--totaling 2.2 miles--are being dug opposite the northern part of the French sector/sector border. Closer to the center of the city, on the French sector/sector border, paving blocks have been ripped up along Schwedter Strasse and ditch digging is underway for several blocks between Gleim and Demminer Strasses. Similar excavation began in Potsdamer Platz around 26 February.

The ditches vary somewhat in dimension, but average 9 or 10 feet in depth, 16 feet across the top and 10-12 feet at the bottom. The West Berlin side of the ditch is steeper

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than that nearer East Berlin or East Germany. In rural areas, the cleared strip along the excavations has been widened from the customary 30 feet to 60 or even 90 feet.

The areas presently being ditched could be worked most of the year and are more favorable for such activity at this time of year than many others along the periphery of West Berlin--all of which is covered by snow. They have an average elevation of 145 feet with a water table depth of 19 feet.

The Communists evidently intend to line the ditches with concrete. This probably is dictated by the nature of the topography around Berlin: the sandy, porous soil and high water table would lead to washouts if the ditches were not lined. Large concrete slabs have been sighted near many of the excavations and reportedly are stockpiled at a farm near the ditches opposite the British sector/zonal border. According to USCOB, a cement factory near the US sector/zonal border has a greater stockpile of concrete slabs than at any time in the past 18 months. As yet, however, none of the slabs has been installed. It is estimated that 40,000 tons of concrete--well within East German production capabilities --would be required to line the ditch if it completely encircled West Berlin.

Whether it will do so is unknown. According to [redacted]

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[redacted] recent [redacted]

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have claimed that the Ulbricht regime plans a 5-year "modernization" of all the fortifications around the city. These defectors, at least one of whom claims to have seen a full-scale mock-up of the project at Brandenburg, report that the fences and barriers now in use are to be replaced by a uniform system of mesh wire, a ditch, a paved roadway for motorized patrols and a "main alarm system"--possibly electrified trip wires.

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vation sites has said that the company which employed him is responsible for digging 31.1 miles. There are 54.5 miles of the sector/zonal border not comprised of canals, rivers or lakes and thus suitable for ditching. 5.7 miles reportedly have been completed so far.

There is some indication that the East Germans may in time intend to dismantle part, if not all, of the 9.3 miles of masonry wall through the heavily populated, industrial central area of the city. There is no apparent need for both a ditch and masonry wall, yet excavation of a ditch is underway in Potsdamer Platz and on Schwedter Strasse. In addition, several of the buildings along Bernauerstrasse, where rear walls of East Berlin factories, warehouses and apartments are an integral part of the masonry fortifications, are being demolished for an as yet undetermined purpose. This type of activity along Bernauerstrasse has continued intermittently since August 1961.

Electric Fencing

The longest stretch of fencing to have been installed along the sector/zonal borders begins on the north side of Heerstrasse and extends 3.3 miles northward to Radeland Strasse. There are eight other locations where fence construction has been completed or is in progress. One runs behind the masonry wall of Stallschreiber Strasse between Alte-Jakobstrasse and Alexandrinen Strasse, opposite the US sector.

Bulldozers

During the last several weeks, the East Germans have accumulated 180 new KT-50-PL bulldozers at the Volksarmee training area at Busendorf, 15 miles outside Berlin. There is no evidence, however, linking the dozer park directly to the ditch digging and fence construction around Berlin.

The KT-50-PL is a medium size machine in standard use for road, railroad, and canal construction throughout East Germany.

At present, possibly because of adverse weather conditions, relatively little equipment is being used in the ditching around Berlin. Four dozers have been working at the French sector sites, while three dozers and two power shovels have been in use at the British Sector sites.

The only East German factory known to manufacture the KT-50-PL is located at Brandenburg, about 15 miles northwest

of Busendorf. Its output has been estimated at 50 dozers per month. Production reportedly was discontinued at the end of 1964--which suggests the dozers are being stored at Busendorf prior to shipment elsewhere.

However, Busendorf is an unlikely place to assemble bulldozers for shipment elsewhere, even if mid-winter storms have crippled transportation routes. It is not served directly by major road or rail facilities, although both are available within a few miles.

The location, guarding and use of military trucks to move the dozers to Busendorf suggest military acquisition. If such is the case, the 180 dozers would more than triple the number of bulldozers already owned by the Volksarmee.

Why?

The effort and expense--an estimated minimum of \$7 million--to construct a ditch, roadway, and fence system along West Berlin's sector/zonal borders would appear to be based on several considerations. Almost 600 people fled across to West Berlin in 1964. The regime may intend the new construction to eliminate or soften the more objectionable features of the existing fortifications, highlight West Berlin's physical separation from its hinterlands and lend substance to East German claims that West Berlin is a "separate political entity."

At great expense, the East Germans have worked almost without let-up for the past 3-1/2 years on the erection or upkeep of the border fortifications--a shoddy, obtrusive and oft-times jerrybuilt system of concrete, wood, and wire. Much of this effort has involved plugging gaps in the masonry wall which divides the central city along the sector/sector border or clearing wooded stretches and stringing rows of barbed wire along the sector/zonal borders.

Providing greater range of observation and opportunity for motorized patrols along the sector/zonal borders, a ditch and road system around the entire city could facilitate a significant reduction in the 13,000-14,000 frontier troops now deployed around the city. USAREUR estimates the current ratio of frontier troops to miles of West Berlin border as three times greater than that along the East-West German interzonal border.

Border guard morale is chronically poor and a matter of utmost concern to the East German regime. Sixteen frontier troops have defected to West Berlin since 1 November 1964; the equivalent of four companies have fled since August 1961. A requirement for fewer guards would permit more selectivity in recruiting.

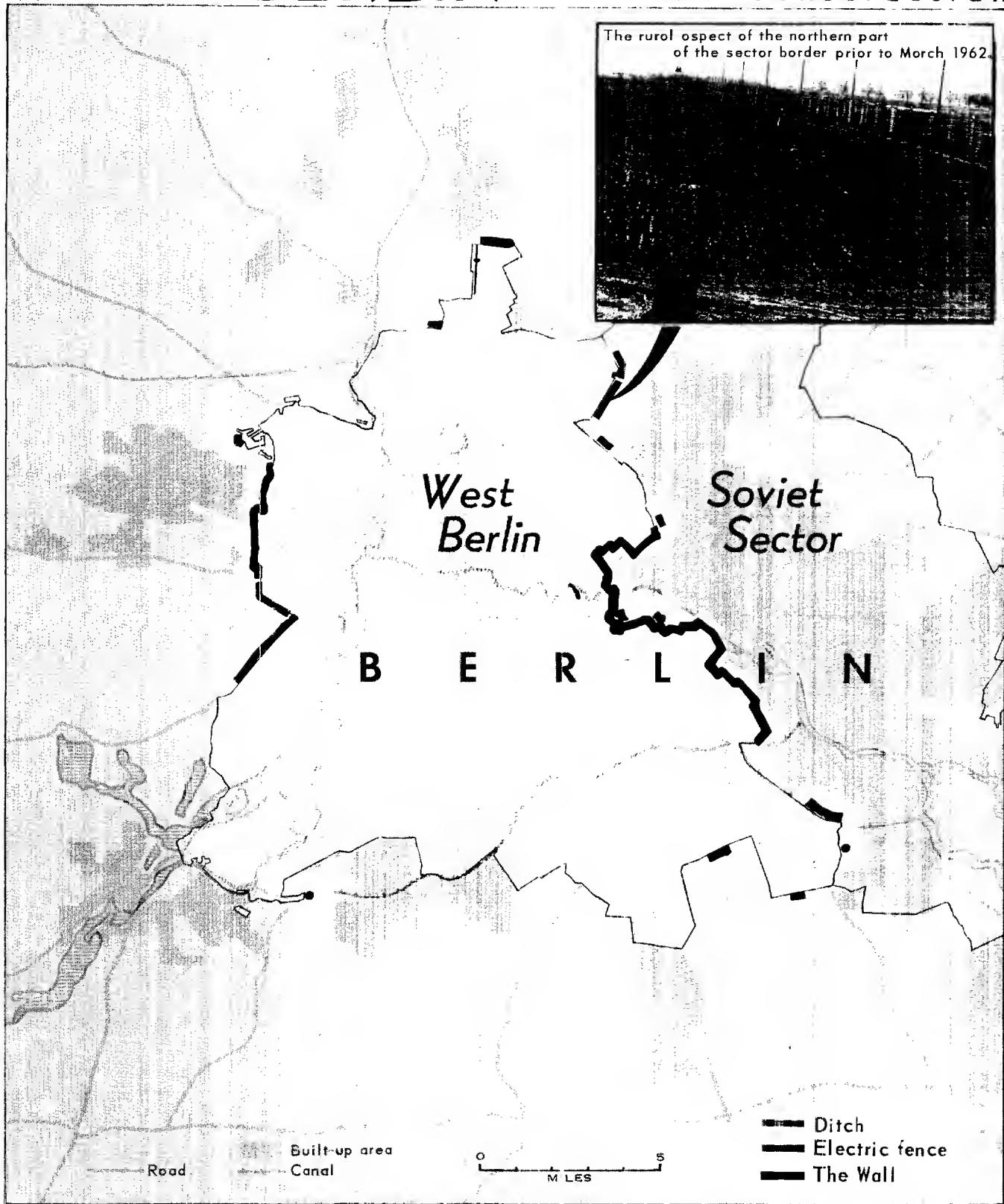
Finally, it is possible that completion of the ditch system would accompany the long awaited political move of formally incorporating East Berlin into the GDR.  

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[redacted] has reported that his party organization at a major East Berlin factory has been instructed to clear the decks for a major propaganda campaign timed for mid-1965. The source has commented that his fellow party members expect that the new campaign will be concerned with an extraordinary Volkskammer election. The last Volkskammer election was held in October 1963; another is not due until 1967. However, such an election would be in order if the Ulbricht regime intends to incorporate East Berlin and could be timed to coincide with the West German parliamentary elections set for September. The incorporation of East Berlin could in turn result in an attempt to exclude Allied military from the former Soviet Sector.

# WEST BERLIN / Recent Ditch and Fence Construction



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